Confidential until released for publication as follows:-

Morning Papers .. 20th July, 1945.
Evening Papers .. 20th July, 1945.

BIRTHS IN QUEENSLAND IN 1944.

If births in Queensland continue at the same rate as they reached in 1944 in spite of the effects of the war and the number of husbands absent with the Forces, they will eventually produce an average of 2·73 children per marriage. The corresponding figure for 1938 was only 2·62. The effect of the war showed itself in some reduction in the number of births to newly married couples. There has been a definite increase in the number of children born to married couples who have been married for four years or more, who have been comparatively little affected by the war. It is reasonable to expect, that if so many husbands had not been absent and had adequate housing been available the newly married couples would have shown a similar increase, which would have brought the indicated figure of average family up to 2·90.

The number of children per marriage required to replace the present population is 2·29 after allowing for those who die in childhood or who do not marry. The number of children now being born is therefore 20 to 25 per cent.* more than is needed to replace the present population, and gives Queensland the basis of a future expansion which most of the other States do not seem to possess. The greatest contribution to this increase comes from the rural population and from the cities of Cairns, Mackay, Gympie, Maryborough and Bundaberg. Brisbane and Townsville at present are not producing enough children to replace their adult populations and Rockhampton and Toowoomba only do so by a narrow margin.

In 1944, of the women aged 20-24, 47 per cent. were married as against only 36 per cent. in 1938 and figures for other ages show a similar reduction of the age of marriage. As compared with pre-war ages of marriage, this reduction will increase the number of children born by about 5 per cent. and from the population point of view it is certainly to be hoped that this lower average age of marriage will prove permanent.

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*Figures published in Bulletin No. 4 of 21st May, 1945 show a net reproduction rate of 1.32. This rate, however, was calculated by the Kuczynski formula which does not allow for the fact that war-time marriages have abnormally increased the proportion of married women in the population at present, and as a result the proportion of newly married women, that is, women in the most productive period of marriage, is greater than normal.

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19th July, 1945.